

June 18, 2011

A CENTURY OF POWER IN PETERBOROUGH

In the early history of power development in Peterborough, Ontario, a wool mill company obtained water rights on the Otonabee River just north of the city limits. A few years later, a timber dam with stone piers was constructed. The power obtained was utilized for driving a woollen mill on the east side of the river and also to generate power which was supplied to the city of Peterborough. Later, the power plant was bought-out by the Auburn Power Company who operated for a number of years, utilizing water from the old Auburn woollen mill dam.

Auburn Generating Station was part of the Kerry Electric System which controlled much of the upper Otonabee River.

Edward Lennox, the man who helped build and design the station, was also well known for his many other architectural marvels. Lennox had already conceptualized Toronto's Old City Hall in 1889 as well as what turned into another of Toronto's famous landmarks, Casa Loma. Lennox also commissioned two other power structures: Nassau Mills Generating Station, located just north of Auburn and his last, Lakefield Generating Station, brought into service in 1928.

The original equipment of the Auburn Power Company consisted of one 250 kW, 2300 volt, three-phase, 60-cycle generator and exciter, one 100 kW and one 40 kW unit, the two latter units being 550 Vdc compound-wound railway generators. These were all driven by water wheel. Power and light were distributed in Peterborough as well as to the Peterborough Radial Railway Company. In 1910, the Auburn Power Company was purchased by the Electric Power Company including the water rights of the Auburn Woollen Mills Company.

A larger development was planned to economically utilize the minimum flow of the river at that point. Work started in 1910 on an entirely new plant, which was completed and placed in operation in early 1912. The plant operated in parallel with the company's Otonabee plant upstream (now Peterborough U.C.) and the American Cereal Company now PepsiCo Foods Canada Quaker Manufacturing Facility.